

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

Partnerships and Accountability

Results of Study to Evaluate Survival of Enhanced Quality Trout Presented



Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt, Project Leader Jerry McClain, and Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill of the Alpena FRO attended the Great Lakes Fishery Commission Upper Lakes Meeting from March 22-25 in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Woldt presented results from the Lake Huron Enhanced Quality Study, which compared coded-wire-tag (CWT) returns of standard and enhanced quality Lewis Lake strain lake trout yearlings reared at Jordan River National Fish Hatchery (NFH), to the Lake Huron Committee. For this study, paired plantings of standard quality (approx. 20 per pound) and enhanced quality (approx. 10 per pound) CWT lake trout were planted at each of four sites in both 1996 (1995 year class) and 1998 (1997 year class). The four sites stocked with experimental lake trout from north to south were Adams Point, Middle Island, Sturgeon Point, and Point Au Barques. For each year class, approximately 30,000 standard quality and 30,000 enhanced quality lake trout yearlings were planted at each stocking site. Since 1996, these CWT lake trout have been captured in survey, commercial (gill-net and trap-net), and recreational gears. Woldt showed two types of analyses: 1) an effort independent analysis using Chi Square methods to analyze returns from all sources and 2) an effort dependent analysis using the Wilcoxon Test for Matched Pairs to analyze only survey caught fish. Both analyses used return data through 2003. Woldt discussed the pros and cons of the two analysis techniques and compared results of the Lake Huron Study to those of the Lake Michigan Study. Overall, the results of the Lake Huron study using either analysis technique showed that the enhanced quality fish survived significantly better than the standard quality fish, although significant differences in survival were not detected for each site and each year class using the Wilcoxon Test for Matched Pairs. Woldt stressed that the Lake Huron study results only pertain to Lewis Lake fish reared at Jordan River NFH. A manuscript summarizing the results of the Lake Huron Enhanced Quality Study is currently being prepared. Evaluating the effects of hatchery rearing procedures allows the Service to better support lake trout restoration efforts by providing the best quality hatchery product possible. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species.

Aaron P. Woldt

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Reduction Efforts Initiated on Lake Huron Eurasian Ruffe Population



Alpena Fishery Resources Office (Alpena, Michigan) initiated efforts to reduce the only known population of Eurasian ruffe (ruffe) in Lake Huron, located in the Thunder Bay River. The ruffe is an invasive species native to the Black and Caspian Seas of Eurasia. It gained access to the Great Lakes area of the U.S. from the ballast waters of ocean going vessels. Ruffe are thought to compete with yellow perch and other native species for food and habitat resources. Reduction efforts are targeted at removing spawning phase adults prior to reproduction in the spring. Small mesh gillnets are used to remove the ruffe. This effort began in 2002 and 2004 is the third year targeting the reproductive cycle of this invasive species. Efforts will continue through the end of May. Biological data will be collected on all captured ruffe, including length, weight, and age (from scales, dorsal spines, and otoliths). Efforts to address the threats to aquatic species and provide effective conservation and management are important components of the Fisheries Strategic Vision.

Anjanette K. Bowen

Public Use

Thunder Bay Junior High School Career Daze



Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill participated in the Career Daze at the Alpena Junior High School on April 2. The purpose for the event was to introduce junior high school students to careers that are available with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Dr. Hill delivered a PowerPoint presentation to over 100 student participants describing career opportunities with the Fish and Wildlife Service, including information on job activities and student employment programs. A variety of other careers were presented during the event by community professionals. Partnerships with other community organizations, particularly for educational purposes which enhance public use, are an important part of the Service's Strategic Fisheries Vision.

Tracy D. Hill

Cooperation with Native Americans

TFC Provides Final Harvest Limits for Lake Whitefish and Lake Trout

On April 28, 2004 the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC) agreed on final lake trout harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters of Lakes Superior, Michigan and Huron. This action completed a primary role of the TFC and its Modeling Sub-Committee (MSC), the annual development of recommended safe harvest limits for State and Tribal lake whitefish and lake trout fisheries in these Great Lakes waters. Using the most current and statistically valid assessment and harvest data available, the MSC uses Statistical Catch at

Age Modeling (SCAA) to produce recommended safe harvest limits for the upcoming fishing season. The interagency TFC reviews the recommendations of the MSC and approves the numbers, then provides the recommended limits to the parties of the 2000 Consent Decree. Final recommended harvest limits for lake whitefish were provided to the Parties on December 15, 2003. Alpena FRO Project Leader Jerry McClain Chairs the TFC and Alpena FRO Treaty Fisheries Unit Leader Aaron Woldt Co-chairs the MSC. Interagency participation in the Modeling Sub-Committee and the Technical Fisheries Committee ensures cooperation and agreement for establishment of safe harvest limits for lake whitefish and lake trout. The effort fulfills the Service trust responsibilities to the Great Lakes natural resources (lake trout rehabilitation effort) and to the 1836 Treaty Tribes.

Jerry R. McClain

Leadership in Science and Technology

Gearing up for Field Season

During the month of April, Fishery Biologists Adam Kowalski and Scott Koproski readied the Alpena FRO vessels for the field season. Kowalski and Koproski inventoried required and recommended safety equipment to ensure all needed gear was on board the vessels and in working condition. Flares were inspected and replaced if expired. Other general maintenance tasks included charging vessel batteries, ensuring all the proper tools were on board, checking spare spark plugs, checking fire extinguishers, installing vessel electronics like GPS and radar, and checking the basic condition of the vessels and trailers. These inspections are an annual process done at the Alpena FRO to ensure the safety of employees and the condition of the vessels. These annual inspections help provide Alpena FRO employees with a safe working environment while in the field. Maintaining all vessels in safe and proper working condition ensures that employees can effectively, efficiently, and safely perform their jobs.

Adam T. Kowalski

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Road Stream Crossings in Northern Lower Michigan

On April 15, Biologists Wells and Enterline met with representatives from the Montmorency County Road Commission (MCRC) and Huron Pines RC&D to identify road crossing projects that are preventing fish passage and contributing to sedimentation in the Thunder Bay River Watershed. The MCRC identified two sites they would like to see completed and have been recognized as fish passage concerns. Engineering and labor for these sites would be provided by the MCRC. Request for additional money to purchase bottomless culverts for the two sites were requested from MCRC. Huron Pines RC&D acknowledged they had some money to put towards these projects. Biologist Wells informed the group that one of the sites had been submitted for funding through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' Fish Passage Program but notification has not yet been received on funded projects. The site is located on Greasey Creek and would provide access to 6 miles of spawning and nursery habitat for brook trout in the Thunder Bay River Watershed. This is an example of collaboration between federal and local governments to enhance aquatic habitat, and foster positive working relationships to

benefit fish and wildlife resources. The project has the potential of opening 6 miles of spawning and nursery habitat to native brook trout.

Susan E. Wells

Lost Lake Woods Association Wetland Restoration



Biologist Enterline met with Jim Hazelman (East Lansing PLO), contractors Sharboneau & Son, and Lost Lake Woods Association manager, committee member, and maintenance crew to review final plans for two large wetland restoration projects scheduled for construction in June of 2004. The group met on the afternoon of April 30 at Lost Lake Woods where an inventory of all needed materials was taken and accounted for, the partnership between the Service, Ducks Unlimited and Lost Lake Woods was re-affirmed and logistical matters such as site access and sequence of events was discussed. Both projects are scheduled for completion before the end of Ducks Unlimited's fiscal year, June 30. Collectively the two projects will restore 313 acres of wetlands in Alcona County, Michigan. Wetland dependant species such as some migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, reptiles and amphibians will all benefit from these large wetland restorations. Located in isolated, forested lands on a 10,000 acre parcel of property these restorations should provide quiet nesting and rearing habitat for waterfowl.

Heather Enterline

Workforce Management

New Trawling Vessel Arrives at Alpena FRO



On April 13, 2004 Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski traveled to American MetalCraft Marine, Inc. (AMCM) in Clayton, NY to pick up the Alpena FRO's new vessel. Biologist Koproski also conducted sea trials and tested the trawling apparatus with personnel from AMCM to ensure the new vessel will meet station needs. The new vessel, christened the R/V Sentinel, will be primarily used to monitor the introduction and expansion of Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) in Lake Huron, but it will also be used on other projects. In 2003, the Boston Whaler used by the Alpena FRO for ANS surveillance was retired due to safety concerns. The R/V Sentinel is a 26 ft. aluminum vessel with a center console and is powered by twin 100 hp Johnson motors. The trawling boom and winch from the old vessel were fit onto the Sentinel by AMCM. AMCM also modified the power source for the winch, enabling it to be powered by the vessel batteries which are charged by the Johnson motors. These improvements eliminated the need for an onboard generator to charge batteries to power the winch and resulted in more usable deck space. AMCM also installed a charging system that can be plugged into any 110 outlet to charge vessel batteries. This new system eliminates the problems associated with the charging system on the retired vessel and thus increases sampling efficiency. The R/V Sentinel's maiden cruise will be during the month of May on the St. Clair River. Alpena FRO staff will be attempting to capture Lake Sturgeon in the St. Clair River using set-

lines. Staff will also be monitoring lake sturgeon movement and habitat preferences using telemetry equipment. Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) pose a serious threat to native fish species. ANS species typically out-compete native fish for food and preferred habitat, and in the absence of native predators their abundance can grow very quickly. The R/V Sentinel will allow staff at the Alpena FRO to monitor the expansion and document the introduction of ANS species in Lake Huron. This work helps fulfill the Service's goal of preventing and reducing the establishment and spread of aquatic nuisance species.

Scott R. Koproski

Biologist Co-instructs MOCC Course

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO co-instructed a Department of Interior (DOI) Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) at the Marquette Biological Station from April 27 to 29, 2004. Kyle Krysiak served as lead instructor, and other co-instructors included Darrian Davis, Deb Winkler, and Tim Peiffer. The primary goal of this course was to train Service employees to safely operate motorboats in the work environment. DOI Policy 485 DM 22 requires operators of all department watercraft to successfully complete MOCC training and complete refresher MOCC training every 5 years thereafter. Krysiak, Davis, Winkler, Peiffer, and Woldt staged an informative, well organized course that included classroom, pool, and on-water instruction, and all 10 students successfully earned their MOCC certification. MOCC training and refresher training are valuable curricula designed to make Service personnel competent and safe boaters. Teaching MOCC courses is consistent with the Service's goal of providing employees with opportunities to maintain competencies, improve opportunities for professional achievement, and safely perform their jobs.

Aaron P. Woldt